

# THE FOUNDATION POST

Q4, 2017



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Five former VidyaGyan students, aspiring to change the world around them.



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Year End Edition





## EDITORIAL

Big or small, an achievement merits appreciation. After all, in the words of Ella Wheeler Wilcox, “A pat on the back is only a few vertebrae removed from a kick in the pants, but is miles ahead in results.”

It seems only fair that we conclude the final quarter of 2017, a year that offered both victories and lessons in equal measure, by acknowledging and celebrating the much-deserved success stories of our precious little gems - our students.

Students like Swati Verma, who is not only doing well for herself; pursuing an undergraduate degree at the famed Ramjas College, but also doing good for others back home in Lucknow; giving tuition, teaching her sisters and other kids younger than her.

Students like Sagar Sharma, who hails from a village in Hapur, Uttar Pradesh - a village that many haven't heard of; who couldn't pursue his dreams of joining the Indian army because a disability stood in his way; who studied harder than most kids his age to earn not just better grades and accolades, but scholarships for his higher education. Now studying at Christ University,

Bengaluru, he is an achiever we're proud to have mentored at an early age.

As people of the world draw curtains on another eventful year, we at Shiv Nadar Foundation feel obliged, and irrevocably honoured, to reach out and 'catch up' with the life and times of young VidyaGyan alumni. Where has their story taken them so far? What kind of young adults are they becoming? What do they think about themselves, education, their family, their village or city, India and the world?

Now since it isn't possible to feature every student we've ever taught, we've presented here a motley crew of achievers, as ambitious as they are conscientious.

Their words will charm you, their wisdom will surprise you. So join us, and doff your hats to five of the brightest stars we have had the pleasure of knowing - Swati, Sagar, Akansha, Dixit and Anmol.

May we all have a very happy and prosperous new year!



**“I didn’t go to school because I wanted to grow up and become something. I simply went to study.”**

## RAISING THE BAR - ONE STEP AT A TIME

**Anmol Ratan**  
IIT, Guwahati

VidyaGyan Alumnus - Batch of 2017

17 year-old Anmol Ratan has a sound head on his shoulders. A clear thinker and quick learner, he is not just hoping to “get picked up during placements” by a company; he’s also trying to give back to his kith and kin, his community, village, and India at large.

Born in Rampur, UP, Anmol knew about few professions as a child. He knew cricket of course, and law; his uncle was a lawyer, but the only vocation he knew up-close was teaching, simply by virtue of being a student. Today, when he is an educated adult pursuing a design degree, he’s heard of, and read about, many other careers.

That he is a smart kid with a keen, seeking mind is quite apparent, especially when he talks about his favourite teacher at VidyaGyan, and her tutoring method of “learning through competition”.

The teacher was Sangita Rai, the subject English. To encourage the habit of speaking English, she would reward students with toffee and chocolate. Anmol is quick to add, “More than one at times. More English. More chocolate. That was the time when I learnt English most effectively.”





Anmol's journey from Rampur to Guwahati makes for an endearing tale, but he is clearly not done. He is eager to discover what more he can do with his love of art and design - a love he's harboured since he first visited an art museum as a child. At the same time, he is equally concerned about the well-being of his community, and communities like his own in villages across India.

He wants to help everyone. "I want to tell them that it's important to remember...", says he like a man wise beyond his years, not a young boy still green behind the ears, "that education is not everything". Baffling as it may sound, he goes on to explain himself.



"The skill they already have, what they need is direction. So... I'll go to my village, to people I know, to primary schools... We can share learnings, get better at our craft. You know, I don't have a plan for everyone right now. But I can surely try to give some people direction."



"I have observed the education system in villages. I've also observed the skills some village folk are born with. Like basket weaving... children do it. Same with clay, pottery. It's pretty much in their blood. It's an art, and they need to know that. It has a market globally."

It is heartening to listen to him. Anmol Ratan, a boy in his teens, son of a farmer from Uttar Pradesh, future of the country.







**“As a child, I didn’t have the confidence to speak in front of anyone. No problem now!”**

## **DARING TO DREAM - AN EARLY START**

**Swati Verma**  
Ramjas College, New Delhi

VidyaGyan Alumna - Batch of 2017

No problem indeed. During the course of a short and sweet chat, Swati Verma proves this repeatedly. Currently pursuing B.Com. at Ramjas College, Swati had set her eyes on becoming a chartered accountant at a young age, motivated primarily by an uncle’s advice, a banker. “Coaching from December. Exam in June.” Her focus is unwavering, and simple.

Growing up in Lucknow, however, in a family of five with one breadwinner, she hadn’t ever thought this far ahead. “My father is a government school teacher, mother a homemaker. I have two younger sisters, both studying in Lucknow.” She speaks as if she’s spoken these very lines many times before. “I didn’t have any facilities in primary school... never thought of becoming a CA.”

All it took, she is prompt to remind, was a drastic change in the quality of her education.

“At VidyaGyan, I got every opportunity to do what I wanted. The facilities were international, the teachers available whenever we had any doubt(s). They guided us, mentored us...as our parents. We also got scholarships from VidyaGyan for our graduation.” Given the right platform, Swati could dare to dream.



Opportunities made her confident; confidence led to pride. From honours in athletics to the praise of her teachers, she earned it all - even a “10 CGPA in my 10th boards”. The highlight, for her at least, has to be receiving her 12th standard medal from Roshni Nadar Malhotra, Trustee, Shiv Nadar Foundation.

Doesn't she wish that every kid was fortunate enough to receive the kind of education that she did? Yes, she does. As a matter of fact, she is doing her bit to ensure it. “I teach my sisters. I also give tuition to kids younger than me.”

The curse of poverty might be too real for her, but she knows what the real curse is. “Illiteracy is the main reason for poverty. Everyone should be educated. In villages like mine, there are no teachers in many primary schools... I have not yet decided how, but I want to help.”

What about the ones who can't afford school? “I will teach them personally. For free!”







**“Money - that’s what everyone’s chasing, and that’s what they’re judging everything by.”**

## STRIVING TO BE BETTER - HER UNFINISHED ODYSSEY

Kalpana Kushwaha  
NIFT, Jodhpur

VidyaGyan Alumna - Batch of 2017

Make no mistake, Kalpana Kushwaha values money a fair bit. Her problem, if one can call it that, is watching the world obsess over it.

A textile design student at NIFT, Jodhpur, Kalpana knows only too well what money can or can't do. "The big challenge is always financial. My parents have borrowed. My mother sold her cattle." The first challenge, however, wasn't monetary. It was convincing her parents. "They would say: 'First study design, then struggle finding jobs, then do a private job with no security, no holidays. Why?' They wanted me to get a government job. I had to convince everyone, especially my father."

How did she manage the unthinkable? "I asked my principal to talk to him."

Born in Jalaun, Uttar Pradesh, Kalpana Kushwaha didn't always aspire to be a textile designer. As a child, her plans were way different.

"My grandfather wanted me to become a police officer. I made his dream mine, but after I went to VidyaGyan, I felt that I had a different kind of fire burning in me. I wasn't meant to be an officer. My journey would be different."





From police officer to textile designer - surely that's a leap. How did it come about?

"I learnt a lot in VidyaGyan - good, bad, everything. I'd never even heard English before; here everyone was speaking it. Now I find it funny, but I was actually taught sentences in the 6th standard. Everyone worked hard to help me. They taught me punctuality, discipline; imparted human values."



Couldn't she have learnt these lessons elsewhere? "I doubt it", she answers with a sense of authority. "I learnt thinking out of the box. My art teacher would often say: 'Don't copy, do your own thing. Use your brain. Think different.' He never said that we were wrong. He'd say that we were close, but we could have done it better." Better is what Kalpana is always striving to be. Thankfully, for millions of children like her, she



does not just think about her own betterment. "I have a dream. When I become a successful designer, I would donate 10-20% of my salary to needy children as scholarship. Besides, in village, there's not much employment. I want to start an organisation like Lucknow's Sewa in my village. It will create both trade and employment. We can focus only on handicraft. In Bundelkhand, we make this mat with wild leaves that I'd like to promote."

Even as a textile designer, she yearns to break the mould and try new things. Will we soon see her bring about a revolution in the field of design? "Yes!", she proclaims like the champion she is destined to be.





“Getting the scholarship has been my proudest moment. It felt especially nice to have my name announced by our principal in front of a gathering of 1000 students.”

## BATTLE HALF WON - THE HERO FROM HAPUR

Sagar Sharma  
Christ University, Bengaluru

VidyaGyan Alumnus - Batch of 2017

A chartered accountant in the making, Sagar Sharma still vividly remembers the day he realised his dream of studying at Christ University, Bengaluru. Fresh out of school then, he had just earned a “Vahini” scholarship for his graduation.

Born in a remote village in Hapur, UP, Sagar wished to join the army first, but had to choose accountancy due to his flat foot. “At that time, I wasn’t aware of the profession, or how much hard work it takes... but my teachers at VidyaGyan told me a lot about it. That helped.”

Later when commerce became his preferred stream, he got better clarity. “I liked accountancy. My teacher was very supportive - Mr. Lalit Sharma. He made it easy. Thanks to him, I got 95% in my 12th boards.”

His desire to succeed is exemplary, but he seems in a hurry. When asked why, he says with zen-like calm, “I want to do my studies as quickly as possible, so that I can support my family. That’s why I am doing B. Com. and coaching for CA simultaneously.”





At this point in our conversation, it's only a matter of time before he starts to speak of the biggest challenge that kids like him face. "Funds are a major problem", spouts Sagar. "My father did his early education from my village, and ended up being a small farmer; the only earning member of our family. Now his health is taking a heavy toll on him, but he's still working hard to make a living for our family."



Not one to take things for granted, Sagar is grateful for all the opportunities he's got so far. "If I was not in VidyaGyan, I don't think I would have studied even till the twelfth standard... because my family's condition is such. Being very blunt, this is the reality."

His face lights up when talking about school. A staunch believer in 'equal rights' and 'education

for all', Sagar wants more schools like VidyaGyan in the country. If given a chance, he too would like to do something similar. "I have always been a social worker of sorts. At VidyaGyan, I was part of a social project with a team of 11 members. We went to primary schools to teach kids. Here as well, in college, I am a part of our social welfare organisation, SWO."

Apparently, helping others comes naturally to this aspiring chartered accountant. For the sake of children everywhere, let us hope that it continues to be so.







“I want to be a good designer in the near future, and maybe an entrepreneur at some point in my life.”

## BIJNOR TO BENGALURU - STORY OF A ‘REAL WORLD’ ARTIST

Yuvraj Singh  
NIFT, Bengaluru

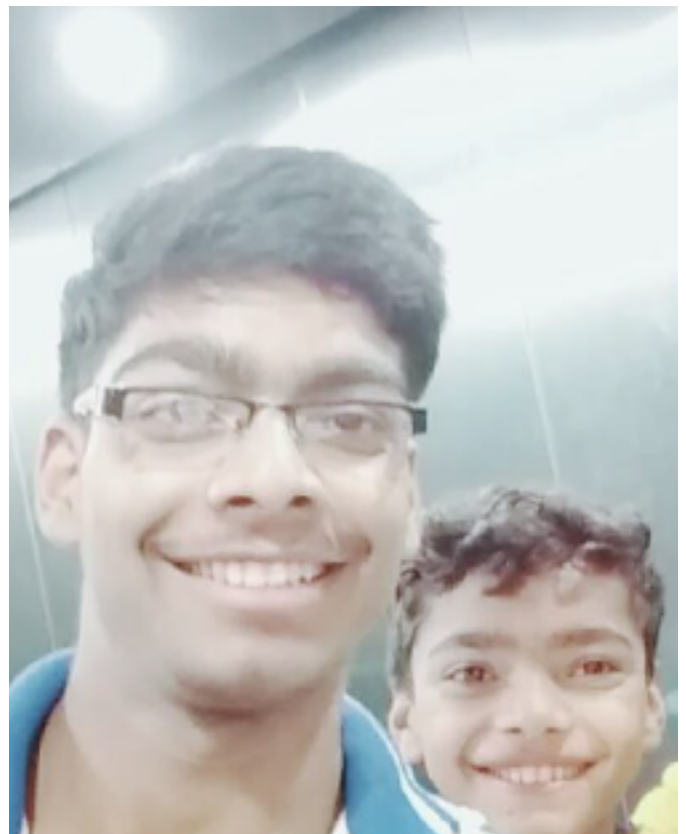
VidyaGyan Alumnus - Batch of 2017h

It is easy to assume that Yuvraj Singh - a hard-working young boy from a village in Bijnor - is here for his own good, but he is quick to correct us.

“And... after becoming something in my life, I’d like to open an institute. Like VidyaGyan has given me the chance to do something different... there are many children in my village who have the talent, but not the opportunities. They’re not aware about the professions they can choose. They think they can only be engineers or doctors, or join the military. I want to bring about awareness. People should get exposure of the real world outside.”

**Yuvraj Singh often addresses the world outside of his native village as “the real world”. Born in Kamalpur in the Bijnor district of UP, Yuvraj grew up far removed from urban India and its many promises.**

“Nobody in my whole village has ever even thought of studying design. When I was a child, my father used to say that I want to see you become an engineer, but now I have other plans.”



Today, as an aspiring fashion designer pursuing his studies at NIFT in Bengaluru, he is an inhabitant of the same “real” world. Who does he credit for this welcome change?

“VidyaGyan has transformed my life”, Yuvraj is quick to answer. “Before coming to VidyaGyan, I had never spoken English. I never thought of studying in Bangalore. At VidyaGyan, I was mentored and guided by my teachers to change my outlook towards what I can become - what I am actually good at. Now I am in one of India’s most reputed colleges for design, a college I wanted to study in. I am on the right path. All thanks to VidyaGyan!”

When asked about painting, Yuvraj points out that it was probably painting that led him to design in the first place. “Design and spaces attract (me) a

lot, but I love to paint. Some of my paintings have been gifted to Akhilesh Yadav, the CM of Uttar Pradesh, even to the US Ambassador to India.”

Impressive, isn’t it? Here’s hoping his love for creating art leads him to greener, more fulfilling pastures.

Speaking of his life at VidyaGyan, he recollects how living away from his parents “was kind of a daunting challenge” for him. He couldn’t cope at first, but gradually learnt to find joy and solace in hostel life through his academic achievements, and his love of painting. “When I was in class VIII, I applied for the National Science Olympiad exam, and secured all India rank 43!”, he says, beaming with pride.







## SNAPSHOTS

### ROSHNI NADAR MALHOTRA

PROFILED IN THE ECONOMIC TIMES' '40 UNDER FORTY' LIST OF 2017



Roshni Nadar Malhotra, Executive Director & CEO, HCL Corporation; Trustee, Shiv Nadar Foundation, was featured in this year's edition of The Economic Times' "40 under Forty". Curated from an initial list of 1000 business leaders from corporate India, the professionals identified represent diverse industries and leadership roles. What connects them is their passion to do business, making a difference with the success of their companies and driving a positive and lasting contribution to the communities that they live in.

AWARDED VOGUE INDIA'S 'LEADERSHIP IN PHILANTHROPY' AWARD  
Vogue India felicitated Roshni Nadar Malhotra, Trustee, Shiv Nadar Foundation; Executive Director & CEO, HCL Corporation, as 'Philanthropist of the Year' in recognition of her work as a philanthropist in the field of education.

### VIDYAGYAN

GRADUATION CEREMONY OF 2ND BATCH OF VIDYAGYAN STUDENTS

On 22nd July, VidyaGyan celebrated its second graduation ceremony. The ceremony marked a milestone this year, as the first batch from VidyaGyan's Sitapur campus graduated from its Leadership Academy and joined the pool of students graduating from the Rural Leadership Academy. 380 students passed out of the academy in 2017, with 259 students scoring above 80%, and 93 students scoring above 90%. Mr. Umang Bedi, Managing Director, India & South Asia, Facebook, and Mr. Abhinav Bindra, India's only solo Olympic gold medalist, were the guests of honour at the ceremony, which was attended by VidyaGyan students, teachers, parents and other dignitaries.



### SHRI RAM NAIK, GOVERNOR, UTTAR PRADESH, VISITED THE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY IN SITAPUR



Hon'ble Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Ram Naik visited the Sitapur campus of VidyaGyan on September 28, 2017. During the visit, he laid the foundation stone for VidyaGyan's upcoming sports arena and interacted with the students, inspiring them with the story of his life's journey. The Hon'ble Governor also felicitated teachers and student achievers in the fields of academics, sports and music.

### SSN

#### SSN BUILDS A TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED, SOLAR-POWERED, BATTERY-OPERATED CART



Dr. R. Seyezhai, from the department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering (EEE), and her PhD student, Mr. A. Bharathi Sankar have designed a 4 seat battery powered vehicle which can be charged by solar radiation and electricity. The big innovation in the creation of this vehicle has been

the development of advanced electric drive using brushless DC motor, an industry first. The vehicle can cover up to 70 kilometres at a maximum speed of 40 km/hr on a single charge.

### SHIV NADAR SCHOOL

#### VISITED BY JULIE BISHOP, MP, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AUSTRALIA



The Hon'ble Julie Bishop, MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of Australia, visited Shiv Nadar School, Gurgaon, along with Her Excellency Harinder Sindhu, the Australian High Commissioner to India, on July 19, 2017. During her visit, she delivered a speech on 'Careers of the Future'.

### SHIV NADAR UNIVERSITY

#### FIRST BATCH OF WSP CERTIFICATE PROGRAM COMPLETES CERTIFICATE

The maiden batch of 'Certificate Program in Water Science and Policy' successfully completed the module at Shiv Nadar University. The first-of-its-kind program is delivered by experts from around the world who have worked, made policies, and initiated change on issues related to water. According to the 14 participants who came from varied backgrounds including civil society organisations, extensive engagement with faculty and learning from peers were among the most valuable takeaways of the program.

# ABOUT SHIV NADAR FOUNDATION

- ▶ Shiv Nadar Foundation was established in 1994 by Shiv Nadar, Founder, HCL - a US\$ 7.5 billion leading global enterprise
- ▶ The Foundation is committed to the creation of a more equitable, merit-based society by empowering individuals through transformational education
- ▶ The Foundation pursues the philosophy of 'Creative Philanthropy', which envisages creation of institutions that continue to impact future generations for many centuries to come
- ▶ Total number of students and alumni – 25,000
- ▶ Total investment – INR 51,550 Million (USD 800 Million)

## K-12 EDUCATION



**2009**

Leadership Academy for meritorious rural underprivileged children



**2012**

Chain of urban K-12 schools to create lifelong learners

## HIGHER EDUCATION



**1996**

Ranked amongst India's top engineering colleges



**2011**

Student-centric, multi-disciplinary & research-oriented university

## MASS INTERVENTION



**2012**

Technology-based educational intervention envisioning the eradication of illiteracy



**2010**

Building awareness and propagating modern and contemporary Indian art



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# SHIV NADAR FOUNDATION

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